

between commercial and non-commercial speech, thus permitting government to regulate and censor commercial speech. Since only a few participated in commercial speech, few cared—and besides, the government was there to protect us from unethical advertisements. Supports of this policy failed to understand that anti-fraud laws and state laws could adequately deal with this common problem found in all societies.

Disheartening as it may be, the political left, which was supposed to care more about the first amendment than the right, has ventured in recent years to curtail so-called “hate speech” by championing political correctness. In the last few decades we’ve seen the political-correctness crowd, in the name of improving personal behavior and language, cause individuals to lose their jobs, cause careers to be ruined, cause athletes to be trashed, and cause public speeches on liberal campuses to be disrupted and even banned. These tragedies have been caused by the so-called champions of free speech. Over the years, tolerance for the views of those with whom campus liberals disagree has nearly evaporated. The systematic and steady erosion of freedom of speech continues.

Just one year ago we saw a coalition of both left and right push through the radical Campaign Finance Reform Act, which strictly curtails the rights of all Americans to speak out against particular candidates at the time of elections.

Amazingly, this usurpation by Congress was upheld by the Supreme Court, which showed no concern for the restrictions on political speech during political campaigns. Instead of admitting that money and corruption in government is not a consequence of too much freedom of expression, but rather a result of government acting outside the bounds of the Constitution, this new law addressed a symptom rather than the cause of special interest control of our legislative process.

And now comes the right’s attack on the first amendment, with its effort to stamp out “indecent” language on the airways. And it will be assumed that if one is not with them in this effort, then one must support the trash seen and heard in the movie theaters and on our televisions and radios. For social rather than constitutional reasons, some on the left express opposition to this proposal.

But this current proposal is dangerous. Since most Americans—I hope—are still for freedom of expression of political ideas and religious beliefs, no one claims that anyone who endorses freedom of speech therefore endorses the nutty philosophy and religious views that are expressed. We should all know that the first amendment was not written to protect non-controversial mainstream speech, but rather the ideas and beliefs of what the majority see as controversial or fringe.

The temptation has always been great to legislatively restrict rudeness, prejudice, and minority views, and it’s easiest to start by attacking the clearly obnoxious expressions that most deem offensive. The real harm comes later. But “later” is now approaching.

The failure to understand that radio, TV, and movies more often than not reflect the peoples’ attitudes prompts this effort. It was never law that prohibited moral degradation in earlier times. It was the moral standards of the people who rejected the smut that is now routine entertainment. Merely writing laws and threat-

ening huge fines will not improve the moral standards of the people. Laws like the proposed “Broadcast Indecency Act of 2004” merely address the symptom of a decaying society, while posing a greater threat to freedom of expression. Laws may attempt to silence the bigoted and the profane, but the hearts and minds of those individuals will not be changed. Societal standards will not be improved. Government has no control over these standards, and can only undermine liberty in its efforts to make individuals more moral or the economy fairer.

Proponents of using government authority to censor certain undesirable images and comments on the airwaves resort to the claim that the airways belong to all the people, and therefore it’s the government’s responsibility to protect them. The mistake of never having privatized the radio and TV airwaves does not justify ignoring the first amendment mandate that “Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech.” When everyone owns something, in reality nobody owns it. Control then occurs merely by the whims of the politicians in power. From the very start, licensing of radio and TV frequencies invited government censorship that is no less threatening than that found in totalitarian societies.

We should not ignore the smut and trash that has invaded our society, but laws like this will not achieve the goals that many seek. If a moral society could be created by law, we would have had one a long time ago. The religious fundamentalists in control of other countries would have led the way. Instead, authoritarian violence reigns in those countries.

If it is not recognized that this is the wrong approach to improve the quality of the airways, a heavy price will be paid. The solution to decaying moral standards has to be voluntary, through setting examples in our families, churches, and communities—never by government coercion. It just doesn’t work.

But the argument is always that the people are in great danger if government does not act by: (a) Restricting free expression in advertising; (b) claiming insensitive language hurts people, and political correctness guidelines are needed to protect the weak; (c) arguing that campaign finance reform is needed to hold down government corruption by the special interests; (d) banning indecency on the airways that some believe encourages immoral behavior.

If we accept the principle that these dangers must be prevented through coercive government restrictions on expression, it must logically follow that all dangers must be stamped out, especially those that are even more dangerous than those already dealt with. This principle is adhered to in all totalitarian societies. That means total control of freedom of expression of all political and religious views. This certainly was the case with the Soviets, the Nazis, the Cambodians, and the Chinese communists. And yet these governments literally caused the deaths of hundreds of millions of people throughout the 20th Century. This is the real danger, and if we’re in the business of protecting the people from all danger, this will be the logical next step.

It could easily be argued that this must be done, since political ideas and fanatical religious beliefs are by far the most dangerous ideas known to man. Sadly, we’re moving in that direction, and no matter how well intended the promoters of these limits on the

first amendment are, both on the left and the right, they nevertheless endorse the principle of suppressing any expressions of dissent if one chooses to criticize the government.

When the direct attack on political and religious views comes, initially it will be on targets that most will ignore, since they will be seen as outside the mainstream and therefore unworthy of defending—like the Branch Davidians or Lyndon LaRouche.

Rush Limbaugh has it right (at least on this one), and correctly fears the speech police. He states: “I’m in the free speech business,” as he defends Howard Stern and criticizes any government effort to curtail speech on the airways, while recognizing the media companies’ authority and responsibility to self regulate.

Congress has been a poor steward of the first amendment. This newest attack should alert us all to the dangers of government regulating freedom of speech—of any kind.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO ELLEN ROBERTS

HON. SCOTT MCINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to honor Ellen Roberts for her selfless dedication to the community of Durango, Colorado, and congratulate her on being recognized by the Durango Chamber of Commerce as their 2003 Athena Award Winner. The Athena Award is presented to a woman each year who has shown a commitment to helping other women realize their business goals. Ellen could not be a more worthy recipient. It is a privilege to pay tribute to Ellen for her well-deserved award, and her ongoing efforts to better her community today.

Ellen’s interest in community service can be traced back to her college days where she created her own major at Cornell University in environmental policy. Since Ellen moved to Durango, in 1981, she has been actively involved in the community. Her involvement includes serving as Chairman of the Mercy Medical Center Board of Directors; and on the board for the First National Bank of Durango; and sitting on the Citizens Health Advisory Council; and sitting on the Citizens Steering Committee for a New Library.

It is my privilege to recognize Ellen before this body of Congress and this nation for the recognition she received by the Durango Chamber of Commerce as the Athena Award Winner. She has done much to improve the lives of her community and I wish her continuing success in all her endeavors.

FRED DOWNS, JIM MAYER NAMED DAILY POINTS OF LIGHT AWARD WINNERS

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, on March 1, the Points of Light Foundation singled out two career employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for recognition as a Daily Point of

Light. I know of no individuals more deserving of the honor than Fred Downs and Jim Mayer, each a remarkable success story.

Both men were profoundly injured in Vietnam. Mr. Downs lost his left arm; Mr. Mayer lost both legs below the knee. Both were scarred by shrapnel and multiple surgeries. Their stories could have ended there. Instead, they turned their lives and their work into encouragement and inspiration for other veterans and for all who know them.

Mr. Downs and Mr. Mayer have long volunteered to work with those who have suffered traumatic injury in service to their country. Their service began during the 1991 Gulf War. They heard news reports that Saddam Hussein had dispersed a million land mines to maim and kill coalition forces if they invaded Iraq. They strategized to figure how they could best help the wounded, utilizing their own experiences and recoveries and recalling when they most needed someone with whom to talk.

Mr. Downs and Mr. Mayer organized field trips, picnics and hosted backyard barbecues for the injured from the Gulf War. After the war was over, the team continued visiting service members injured in training accidents or deployments. They keep in touch with many of the patients they have met. Twenty-two of the 58 wounded soldiers Mr. Mayer met during the Gulf War showed up at his house for a July 4th barbecue in 1996 for a five-year reunion. He and Mr. Downs also attend the annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games and the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, where they meet with and counsel veterans.

As American troops began the build-up for Operation Iraqi Freedom, Mr. Downs and Mr. Mayer met with military surgeons at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. They shared their insights into traumatic injuries and talked to them about how they felt when they were injured. The pair also discussed how they thought the medical staff could help the wounded soldiers. They have continued to share their stories with servicemen and women who have similar injuries, who come to realize there is life after amputation. Since April 2003, the pair has visited more than 60 amputee soldiers at Walter Reed and the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, as volunteer amputee peer visitors.

The following article from VA's in-house magazine, *Vanguard*, discusses what these two gentlemen are doing to help the young men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

MESSAGES OF HOPE

With their Kevlar body armor and rapid access to medical treatment, soldiers wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom are surviving what were once fatal injuries. One day they're busting down doors in Baghdad and the next they're lying in a hospital bed with busted-up limbs.

"When you first see them, they're still confused and can't seem to comprehend the magnitude of what happened to them," explained Frederick Downs Jr., VA's chief of prosthetics, describing his visits to wounded troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., which has received almost 300 battlefield casualties from the war in Iraq.

Downs knows exactly what they're going through. As a 23-year-old lieutenant with the Army's 4th Infantry Division, he was nearly killed when he stepped on a "Bouncing Betty" land mine on Jan. 11, 1968, near Chu

Lai, Vietnam. He survived the blast, but lost his left arm above the elbow. Now, more than 30 years later, he shares his story with soldiers who have similar injuries. "I want them to understand there is life after amputation," Downs said.

A SIMPLE MOTIVE

Since April, Downs and Jim Mayer, director of Leadership VA, have visited more than 60 wounded soldiers at Walter Reed and National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., as volunteer amputee peer visitors. Their motive is simple, according to Mayer, who lost both legs to a land mine on April 25, 1969, while serving with the 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam. "If you've been through an amputation and you see others who are experiencing that trauma, you just want to help them in any way you can," he said.

Their efforts began during the 1991 Gulf War after hearing news reports that Saddam Hussein had dispersed a million land mines to maim and kill coalition forces if they invaded Iraq. "We were concerned there were going to be a lot of casualties and we wanted to do something to help," Mayer recalled. The question was, how could they best help the wounded?

Mayer found the answer when a friend asked if he could remember a particular turning point during his recovery at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio. "I remember a former patient who came to visit us one day, it was just a chance encounter. He lost both arms and had these prosthetic hooks. I was mesmerized because I realized he had a life," he said.

The encounter provided hope for his own future, something he said severely wounded soldiers rarely have. "After a traumatic injury, you live hour to hour, day to day and you tend to block out the future. At first you put your hope on the shelf because hope is too far in the future."

And so it was that Mayer, Downs and about a dozen other Vietnam veterans, many who worked for VA, started visiting wounded soldiers and sharing their stories of overcoming traumatic injury. During the first Gulf War, Mayer estimated he volunteered about 800 hours at military hospitals. He organized field trips, picnics and hosted backyard barbecues. He also started bringing milkshakes on each visit, leading patients to nickname him "the milkshake man."

UNFORGETTABLE STORIES

The group dwindled after the war, but Mayer and Downs continued visiting servicemembers injured in training accidents or deployments. Some of the stories are hard to forget. There was the soldier injured on the train to Bosnia when electricity arced from a cable to his helmet and blew off his legs. There was the Ranger who broke his back when he fell out of the Black Hawk helicopter during the 1993 raid in Mogadishu. And there was the sailor who lost his legs when he got tangled in a rope trying to rescue a shipmate and was dragged through a porthole.

Mayer keeps in touch with many of the patients he's met over the years. Twenty-two of the 58 wounded soldiers he met during the first Gulf War showed up at his house for a July 4th barbecue in 1996 for their five-year reunion. He sees others at two of VA's National Rehabilitation Special Events—the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic. Some even come to his April 25 "Alive Day" celebrations, an event he has held every year since 1970 to mark the day he almost died.

THE EMOTIONAL SIDE OF INJURY

As American troops began the build-up for Operation Iraqi Freedom, Mayer and Downs,

along with their buddy Jack Farley, a Vietnam veteran and amputee who serves as a judge with the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, expanded their volunteer role by meeting with military surgeons at Walter Reed to share their insights into traumatic injury. "We talked about how we felt when we were injured and how we thought the medical staff could help the wounded soldiers," said Mayer.

Dr. Artie Shelton, a retired Army colonel who commanded a field hospital in Somalia and now works as a consultant in VA's transplant program, helped arrange the meeting. He said the Army physicians are extremely qualified and well trained, but they may not fully understand the emotional and psychological complexities of traumatic injury. "The doctors know the medical side, but Jim and Fred can tell them about the full impact and repercussion on these soldiers," Shelton said.

Among the aspects of recovery Downs stresses are encouraging the soldiers to do things on their own. "Never tell a guy he can't do something," he said. "You need to encourage him to try, to test himself and see what he can do. It speeds up their psychological healing and helps them get back into life again."

If they have doubts about what they can accomplish, Downs tells them about his own life after injury: going to school, getting married, starting a family, writing three books, and leading VA's multimillion-dollar prosthetic and sensory aids service.

He also has gained international recognition for helping establish land mine survivor programs in several countries. The U.S. Agency for International Development recently asked for his assistance with a land mine eradication program in Afghanistan. (To learn more about his recovery and land mine eradication efforts, visit the Center for Defense Information Web site at www.cdi.org/adm/1250/Downs.html.)

Mayer and Downs volunteer because they've been there and because they care. But also because they want to bring a little dignity to American troops who suffer traumatic injuries.

"Vietnam vets, to put it politely, never actually felt welcomed home," said Mayer. "But these guys coming back from Iraq, we're going to welcome them home and become their friends, help them reconcile their injuries, and bring them a little dignity."

Mr. Speaker, the selflessness, compassion and humanity of Fred Downs and Jim Mayer—all the more profound considering their own experiences—have been important to the young men and women recently injured in service and frightened about what such traumatic change can mean in their lives and how they can overcome it. I know my colleagues join me in expressing our gratitude and respect for their good works.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO ROBERT HARTH

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 10, 2004

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise to pay tribute to the memory and life of Robert Harth. Robert's gift and legacy to Colorado will be the Aspen Music Festival and School, which he deftly guided for twelve years as president and chief executive officer. His recent and all-too sudden death at